United Nations A/C.5/55/SR.21

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
1 March 2001
English
Original: Spanish

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 3 November 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
later: Ms. Dinić ..... (Croatia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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00-72766 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 123: Human resources management (*continued*) (A/53/955, A/54/257, A/54/279 and Corr.1, A/54/450, A/55/168, A/55/253 and Corr.1, A/55/270, A/55/399 and Corr.1, A/55/427, A/55/499; A/C.5/54/2, A/C.5/54/21; A/C.5/54/L.3, A/C.5/55/L.3; A/C.5/55/CRP.1 and CRP.2)

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Report of the Joint Inspection Unit: Administration of Justice at the United Nations (A/55/57* and Add.1 and A/55/514)

Management irregularities causing financial losses to the Organization (also under agenda item 116) (A/54/793 and A/55/499)

1. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of human resources management (A/55/253), said that, although in recent years some headway had been made in some areas of human resources management, much still remained to be done in order to attain the goals envisioned by the Secretary-General as part of the "quiet revolution".

2. In the area of recruitment, placement and promotion, her delegation would like to see stronger emphasis being placed on such key principles as equitable geographical representation, gender balance, transparency and competence. At the same time, her delegation welcomed the fact that the proposals included mechanisms of accountability, monitoring and control, since it was of paramount importance that such mechanisms should be established before delegating authority to programme managers.

3. With respect to the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/55/397), she wished to know why some managers were still reluctant to recruit candidates selected through national competitive examinations (para. 52). According to the Secretary-General's proposal on the delegation of authority (A/55/253, para. 35 (d)), the central review body would restrict itself to confirming that the selection process had been conducted in compliance with agreed procedures. Therefore, the lack of well designed measurable targets and operational guidelines to monitor the impartiality and objectivity of supervisors might well lead to the continuation of already well known instances of favouritism and back door recruitment.

4. Her delegation together with many other delegations was also concerned at the persistence of tailor-made job descriptions. In that regard, it welcomed the proposal to forward the evaluation forms of candidates to the central review body to obtain independent confirmation of the appropriateness of the criteria (A/55/253, para. 12). There would also be a need to re-evaluate the current requirements and develop realistic vacancy announcements that met the objective of rejuvenating the staff of the Organization.

5. She strongly supported the system of national competitive examinations as an indispensable tool for recruiting qualified personnel and ensuring the basic principle of equitable geographical representation. She was concerned that a low percentage of the total appointments were candidates who had been successful in national competitive examinations for posts at the P-2 and P-3 levels (51.8 per cent according to A/55/427). In that regard, her delegation, like other delegations, was of the view that preference should be given to successful candidates from national competitive examinations. She hoped that the Office of Human Resources Management would endeavour to redress that problem.

6. Moreover, the Secretariat should indicate how many successful candidates from national competitive examinations held prior to 1999 were still on rosters and what their immediate prospects were. Moreover, closer consideration needed to be given to finding out why the number of staff appointed through national competitive examinations since 1974 did not differ significantly from the number of staff appointed through promotion to the Professional category from the General Services category, in light of the pending decision as to whether movement from one category to the other should be regarded as a promotion or recruitment.

7. Referring to the issue of mobility (A/55/253, paras. 38-44 and annex III), she said that, while she supported the objective of enhancing the lateral and horizontal mobility of staff, due regard should be attached to offsetting constraints related to the issue, including the employment of spouses and other life/work issues. The successful reform of human

resources management was a sine qua non for the organization to meet the formidable challenges of the new century and, indeed, of the new millennium.

8. **Mr. Hays** (United States of America) said that the initiatives elaborated by the Secretariat in document A/55/253 with a view to the sorely needed updating of the Organization's human resources management system in the context of the Secretary-General's visionary reform programme were essential to maintaining and improving the quality of the international civil service and its staff. The fact that so many delegations had praised the reform philosophy was clear recognition of the exhaustive efforts undertaken by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM). However, much remained to be done to prepare for the needs of the Organization in the next 10 years and beyond. He was sure that even those who did not seem fully convinced would endorse the reforms once they had clearly understood the outcomes proposed and the safeguards to be implemented.

9. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's decision that OHRM should share responsibilities more appropriately with line supervisors and staff working in the field, allowing the latter to take on greater responsibility for day-to-day personnel administration and OHRM to devote greater attention to human resources policy development and to the monitoring of departmental human resources action plans.

10. The status quo, which lacked effectiveness and efficiency, must be replaced by a more dynamic, efficient and productive system. He was confident that, with appropriate controls and strong internal oversight, the delegation of authority to programme managers would improve not only human resources management, but overall programme delivery as well.

11. As noted by other speakers, the Secretary-General's only proposal on the matter which required action by the Committee was that of amending staff rule 104.14 on the establishment, membership and functions of the central review bodies.

12. With regard to increased staff mobility, his delegation strongly supported the proposal to strengthen the Secretary-General's authority to deploy staff to meet pressing requirements. With respect to the mechanisms to promote mobility referred to in document A/55/253, he also requested details regarding the incentives that would promote service in difficult postings.

13. Consideration of the agenda item also offered a valuable opportunity for Member States to consider other measures in the field of human resources management that would make the United Nations a more effective instrument to meet the needs of the twenty-first century.

14. Recruitment and retention of highly qualified personnel was an urgent priority. There was a need for a more flexible, creative and competitive approach that would reflect the growing expectations of many candidates. It was also necessary to rationalize job descriptions and the skills required, adapting them to the needs of the future. In order to update the workforce and achieve successful human resources management, there must be a partnership between supervisors and staff in pursuit of those goals.

15. With respect to the other reports introduced under agenda item 123, he looked forward to expeditious implementation of the recommendations made in the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reports on the education grant (A/55/352) and the recruitment process (A/55/397) and welcomed the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on senior-level appointments (A/55/423) and the administration of justice (A/55/57*) and the reports of the Secretary-General on management irregularities (A/54/793) and accountability and responsibility (A/55/270).

16. Lastly, the issue of staff security, which the Committee would address under another agenda item, was of great concern to his delegation. In the light of the number of staff members who had sacrificed their lives in the service of the Organization, been taken hostage or kidnapped in recent years, he joined the Secretary-General in calling for the implementation of immediate measures to "protect the protectors".

17. **Mr. Kuchynski** (Ukraine) said that he shared the Secretary-General's vision of the priority areas of the human resources management reform process, particularly with respect to streamlining and improving the mechanisms of accountability and coordination, which were crucial to the success of any management reform. Any system of accountability should be based on a clear determination of the responsibilities of staff and management at all levels. In that context, he urged the Secretariat to continue to simplify and streamline the administrative instructions on the functions and performance of staff and managers in the Organization.

18. His delegation had learned with concern from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/55/499) that programme managers were often not held accountable for failure to apply established human resources policies. It was therefore important to strengthen the central monitoring and control functions of the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Management. In that context, the Accountability Panel chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General could be an effective coordinating tool for follow-up to the recommendations of oversight bodies.

19. His delegation welcomed the valuable initiatives for developing human resources management information systems, which would provide for more integrated processing of personnel data. At the same time, it was disappointed by the delays in preparation of the skills inventory of staff and urged the Secretariat to pursue efforts to remedy that problem.

20. His delegation was aware of the growing importance of mobility of United Nations staff, particularly in the context of rapid deployment of mission personnel, and it supported the implementation of a system of managed mobility and looked forward to the elaboration of appropriate mechanisms. However, mobility should not be used to obstruct the inflow of external candidates to the Organization.

21. His delegation had studied with interest the proposals for streamlining contractual arrangements, but it regretted the lack of information on the concept of continuing contracts, particularly the difference between such contracts and permanent appointments. He also requested clarification regarding possible changes in procedures relating to separation for poor performance and the granting of termination indemnities. The Committee should look thoroughly at that issue.

22. His delegation supported the proposal by the Secretariat to streamline the recruitment process, make it more transparent, reduce its duration (from 275 days to 120 days) and to create more transparent mechanisms for recruitment and personnel planning. He also supported the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the recruitment process, particularly regarding the management of rosters of external candidates (A/55/397, sect. III (C)).

23. According to the information provided by the Secretariat, there would be a large number of retirements in the Organization during the next five years (as many as 400 staff members per year). That was a challenge but it also presented an opportunity for rejuvenating the Organization.

24. He stressed the importance of equitable geographical distribution of staff in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirmed the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221 regarding the realignment with the national competitive examinations of the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category and above of staff members from other categories (sect. V, para. 22). The Joint Inspection Unit had stated that equitable geographical distribution should also be taken into account in the "G to P examination", and that competitive examinations should be arranged in such a way as to ensure that General Service staff and outside candidates competed on an equal footing. Those principles remained equally relevant now.

25. As for the goal of gender equality in the Secretariat, he doubted that it would be prudent to replace the criteria of merit and competence with those proposed in document A/55/399. In matters relating to recruitment and promotion the only considerations to be taken into account should be the suitability of the candidates.

26. As for the note on personnel practices and policies (A/C.5/54/21), in which the Secretary-General defined the role of the Secretariat in developing the necessary processes and administrative mechanisms for the implementation of legislative mandates and related directives, it was up to the Secretariat, through the established reporting procedures, to provide adequate information to Member States so as to enable them to take well-informed decisions. In that context, his delegation found the practice of referring to the working methods and pattern of negotiations of the parliamentary bodies, such as the Fifth Committee questionable and believed that the practice should be avoided in future.

27. Lastly, he drew attention to the importance of involving the International Civil Service Commission in the personnel reform process, in particular in reviewing contractual arrangements and defining more competitive terms of employment.

28. **Mr. Pedroso** (Cuba) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The

implementation of a coherent, fair, integrated and transparent human resources strategy was a key element in the implementation of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. For that reason, and bearing in mind that only motivated staff would be able to contribute to the efficient functioning of the Organization, human resources policy should be the result of a systematic and open process of consultation and close coordination between the staff and the Secretariat. It was therefore vital that staff representatives should continue to play a part in the various bodies related to human resources. Moreover, since Member States were ultimately the generators and the clients of the work of the Organization, it was essential that the legislative bodies should be involved in the substantive consideration and in the adoption of proposals concerning human resources.

29. His delegation attached particular importance to the task of reforming human resources management; the latter should be a process aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and quality of the work of the United Nations while, at the same time, preserving the institutional memory of the Organization and its international character. For all those reasons, and recalling General Assembly resolution 53/221 on human resources management, his delegation would not support any proposals which, in the guise of reform, sought to impose reductions in the budget or in the personnel, or which might produce an atmosphere of chaos and arbitrariness that would jeopardize the well-being of the Organization.

30. His delegation appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to provide documents that were better structured and of higher quality and, in particular, believed that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the administration of justice at the United Nations (A/55/57*) made an important contribution to the consideration of the proposed reforms. However, he regretted that the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the same subject (A/55/514) failed to make any substantive recommendations on the Secretary-General's main proposals, thereby making the Committee's work more difficult.

31. The system of delegating authority for the management of human and financial resources and for programme execution to programme managers, which was central to the proposed human resources management reform, must necessarily be accompanied by a sound accountability mechanism the standards and parameters of which should be determined with the participation of Member States and the Organization's staff.

32. There must also be an independent, wide-ranging, efficient and impartial mechanism for the administration of justice to complement the delegation of authority process, and make it more neutral, transparent and effective. As the Joint Inspection Unit had pointed out, the total independence of the justice system must be guaranteed. There should be two bodies to which staff members could appeal. That being said, given its composition and advisory function, the Joint Appeals Board should not be considered a judicial body of first instance. There should be an exchange of views on the matter and the resulting proposals should be submitted to the Sixth Committee for consideration and comment.

33. With respect to the Secretary-General's proposal to abolish permanent contracts and restructure the contractual system by providing for three types of appointments (short-term, fixed-term, and continuing), his delegation was concerned about the serious implications that implementation of that complex proposal would have for safeguarding the institutional memory and the international character of the Organization. Maintaining permanent contracts was inherent in the concept of international civil service. Abolishing that type of contract might discourage young people from joining the Organization because of the lack of job security and precarious career prospects. All that would take place at a critical time, when a high retirement rate was expected.

34. Furthermore, as could be seen from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/55/499 (annex V)), the Secretary-General's proposal was in breach of various General Assembly decisions. Bearing in mind the climate of insecurity and instability which the proposal might generate in the medium and long term and which would be counterproductive to the smooth operation of the Organization, his delegation considered the arguments adduced so far in support of the change to be inadequate, and hoped to receive additional information during the discussions and negotiations on that important issue.

35. With regard to the proposal to make mobility between departments and duty stations a prerequisite for promotion, he said that, although it was necessary to promote greater staff mobility and balance in the staffing of the various departments and duty stations and in the calibre of their staff, the proposed system was too rigid and might be used for punitive purposes in certain circumstances if it was not properly regulated. A genuine mobility system should also include D-1 and D-2 posts and provide incentives to attract more staff to certain duty stations with a persistently high vacancy rate.

36. His delegation wished to see human resources management issues examined as a whole, in sufficient depth and at adequate length so that the outcome of the Fifth Committee's deliberations would meet the concerns and cater to the interests of the majority of Member States. He reserved the right to make further statements on other reports related to human resources management.

37. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made on the item by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and acknowledged the central importance of accountability mechanisms for the successful implementation of human resources management reform. Recalling that in his report on human resources management reform (A/55/253), the Secretary-General had recognized the continuing existence of a multiple-level system of authority and decision-making that blurred individual responsibility, his delegation encouraged him to spell out clearly the authority and responsibility given to managers and to enhance monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

38. The performance management plan proposed in the report (para. 19) was a vital tool that would enable senior managers to indicate to the Secretary-General achievable goals with regard to various programmes and management objectives, in particular human resource planning. He also noted that the annual review provided for under the plan would afford the Secretary-General the opportunity to provide guidance and feedback and to set new objectives for the following year.

39. He commended the Secretary-General's initiative of setting up an integrated human resources planning system and urged the Office of Human Resources Management to continue working to develop the necessary capacity for forecasting and evaluating the Organization's longer-term human resource needs, thereby also facilitating the preparation of the medium-term plan.

40. With regard to the proposal to give more authority to programme managers in the selection of candidates, he believed that it was essential to put in place a well-designed accountability mechanism, including a training plan and internal monitoring and control procedures. That should help managers base their decisions on objective, competitive criteria that would provide placement opportunities for staff on the basis of merit.

41. On the subject of staff mobility between functions, departments, occupational groups and duty stations, he said that mobility was necessary for an organization with complex and interrelated mandates that required a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service. That being said, adequate consideration must be given to the legitimate concerns of staff who might have genuine reasons for not accepting a transfer. The Secretary-General should also ensure the proper mobility of staff between the regional commissions and duty stations so as to resolve the problem of the high vacancy rates in some of them.

42. It was also necessary to streamline and expedite the administration of justice, strengthen informal mechanisms for the resolution of grievances and provide adequate training. His delegation would welcome the submission of comprehensive proposals to the General Assembly; in that connection, he highlighted the central role of the Office of Human Resources Management in establishing policies and guidelines and monitoring their observance and implementation.

43. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the priority attached to the dialogue between management and staff and the extensive communication with managers and staff at large in order to answer questions and exchange ideas. The process should be enhanced in order to keep the interested parties informed and facilitate their effective contribution to the reform process.

44. **Ms. Dinić** (Croatia) said that her Government fully supported the Secretary-General's efforts in carrying out an overall programme of reform of the United Nations. At the Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, Heads of State and Government had reaffirmed their faith in the Organization by stating that

they would spare no effort to make the United Nations an effective instrument for pursuing the priorities adopted in the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), and that the Secretariat should make the best use of the resources by adopting the best management practices and technologies available and concentrating on agreed priorities for the new millennium. In order to fulfil that goal, a partnership among Member States, staff and management of the Organization was needed.

45. Her delegation believed that the Organization's most valuable asset was its staff and that the ability to attract and retain a highly qualified staff was therefore essential. At the same time, equitable geographical and gender distribution must be maintained. Those were the two complementary criteria which must govern the policy on recruitment, placement and promotion of staff.

46. Croatia had always considered national competitive examinations the best method for recruiting qualified young people at the entry level; however, despite the positive steps taken, the recruitment procedure was still too long and discouraging in many cases, and much remained to be done in order to improve the situation.

47. The proposals of the Secretary-General on the delegation of authority to the programme managers (A/55/253) could simplify the process, provided that, in the hiring process, candidates' qualifications were taken into account and the principle of equitable geographical distribution was fully respected. In that context, priority should be accorded to highly qualified candidates from under-represented or unrepresented countries or from countries with the lowest level of representation. Additionally, staff members must accept the new recruitment procedure, which should be accompanied by an oversight mechanism that would help to improve accountability in the Organization.

48. Her delegation also believed that staff members should be protected against cases of lack of accountability on the part of the relevant manager. To that end, the creation of an ombudsman mechanism, independent of both management and staff, could be an acceptable solution.

49. With regard to gender balance, the improvements within the Secretariat in recent years must be acknowledged. Even so, statistical data showed that Eastern European women were most frequently overlooked, particularly for the higher-level posts in the Secretariat. While it was true that a candidate's qualifications should be the main criterion, there were women qualified to hold the highest-level posts in the Organization. Member States must also propose more qualified women candidates for those posts.

50. Her delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposals regarding greater geographical and functional mobility of staff members, which would be an enriching experience for them and would enhance the Organization's credit. At the same time, it subscribed to the observation made by the Advisory Committee regarding those posts where institutional memory and technical expertise played a critical role (A/55/499, para. 13).

51. Lastly, the security of United Nations personnel serving in humanitarian or peacekeeping missions around the world was an issue of great concern to her delegation. Her delegation supported all the proposals aimed at enhancing the protection and improving the training of the Organization's personnel, as well as bringing to justice the perpetrators of acts of violence against personnel. In that regard, a possible revision of the allocation of resources for the purpose of assuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel might be worth considering.

52. **Mr. Gossaye** (Ethiopia) said that a motivated and high-calibre staff was essential to the effective delivery of the programmes and activities of the United Nations. The efficient management of that invaluable asset must therefore be at the centre of the reform of the Organization.

53. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253), in particular, the issue of human resources planning, he noted the activities undertaken to set up measurable goals, particularly the establishment and refinement of a human resources management information system and the decision to create a skills inventory. In his delegation's view, it was an opportune moment to rejuvenate the Organization in the light of the large number of vacancies expected in the next few years. To that end, it concurred with the Advisory Committee that, in formulating human resources action plans, priority should be given to a systematic rejuvenation of the Secretariat and the retention of younger staff.

54. His delegation believed that the issue of vacancy reductions was closely related to all other aspects of

human resources reform, in particular to the need to shorten and simplify the recruitment process. It therefore welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to reduce the number of days it took to fill vacancies, and encouraged him to achieve his goal of filling vacant posts, as soon as possible, at most within 120 days, taking into consideration the unacceptably high vacancy rates in certain field missions and duty stations in Africa. It agreed with the Advisory Committee on the importance of planning recruitment activities well enough in advance to allow all qualified candidates to be screened and judged. (A/55/499, para. 10).

55. Although it also supported the idea of increased mobility, his delegation believed that the implications should be analysed in relation to promotion, term limits, the availability of experts, and institutional memory. The proposed contractual arrangements should be clarified, and their implications for the career development of United Nations personnel should be thoroughly considered.

56. Concerning career development, his delegation was convinced of the need for a system which would recognize competence and performance and would encourage continuous professional growth of staff at all levels. A simplified professional performance appraisal system and a transparent promotion policy were essential elements in the achievement of a healthy career development system.

57. In that regard it should be noted that General Assembly resolution 53/221, on human resources management, contained a provision which, in the view of Ethiopia, ran counter to the principle of career promotion and discriminated against certain staff members. The provision in question called for realignment with the national competitive examination of the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category, in particular regarding academic qualifications and equitable geographical distribution (sect. V, para. 22).

58. In his note on the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category (A/C.5/54/2), the Secretary-General had elaborated in detail the potential negative implications of that provision of resolution 53/221 and requested the General Assembly to reconsider the question. Any organization that lacked promotion opportunities or even hindered upward mobility for any of its staff would impair its own efficiency, ultimately undermining morale and breeding uncertainty. Modern principles and practices of human resources management provided the necessary guidelines to arrive at an objective decision. He hoped that the General Assembly would examine the issue during its current session and rectify that inconsistency.

59. His delegation attached great importance to improving the status of women in the Secretariat and noted that progress had been made, although there was still room for improvement. States should put forward a greater number of women candidates for United Nations posts and should allow the Office of Human Resources Management to identify women candidates to fill the vacant posts. In conclusion he stressed the need to consider the issue of human resources management in the most comprehensive manner possible, in order to achieve a broad consensus.

60. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) said, with reference to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253), that his delegation believed that the building-blocks approach to human resources management reform was entirely justified, and that it commended the Secretary-General's efforts to determine individual responsibilities and to ascertain accountability, with a view to promoting results-oriented management. It also welcomed well-defined competencies for staff in a multicultural environment where their best performance was expected.

61. The report proposed a number of measures designed to improve human resources planning, recruitment, placement and promotion, staff mobility, contractual arrangements and conditions of service, all of which were underpinned by the principles of transparency, simplicity and timeliness. It was hoped that the Secretary-General's proposal for reform would bring about much awaited change in human resources management and thereby improve the performance of the United Nations system.

62. Management reform was a continuous process, which rarely started from zero, and which must endeavour to improve and streamline the existing processes. Where necessary, there should be no hesitation about engaging in a constructive overhaul by removing the problem, reorganizing the structure and sprucing up the procedures. More than a fine tuning was needed to make the human resources management of the United Nations capable of responding to the

complex challenges of a changing world. From that perspective, the Secretary-General's report relied on style rather than substance.

63. His delegation welcomed the 40 per cent reduction in the average time needed to fill organizational vacancies (A/55/253, annex II) and appreciated his eagerness to reduce it further. Care must, however, be taken to ensure that a narrow time frame did not reward proximity and easier access to information, as often happened, prejudicing those who were already disadvantaged. It would be preferable to organize better the assessment of likely vacancies, to announce them in a timely manner, and to complete the selection speedily, so that no one would be at a disadvantage.

64. His delegation was deeply concerned about the lack of equitable geographical representation in the composition of United Nations human resources. Urgent measures should be taken to rectify that imbalance, since there was no justification for the fact that fewer than one third of the posts were subject to geographical representation.

65. With regard to gender balance, meeting the female recruitment targets was a welcome but transitional step. The qualifications and skills of the candidates must not be compromised, since those were the basic elements of effective management. His delegation also welcomed the proposal to enhance staff mobility between functions, departments, occupational groups and duty stations, which should be implemented without discrimination and without undermining performance or professionalism.

66. It was essential that those who were already in the system should have the opportunity for career development, which entailed expanding and enriching jobs and upward mobility provided that that did not shut out new persons and fresh ideas. There should therefore be some ceiling set for internal promotions without excluding capable staff members recruited by external competition.

67. The idea of granting greater discretional powers to programme managers in recruiting staff seemed laudable, but it was fraught with problems. On the one hand, it ran counter to the objective of enhancing lateral and vertical mobility of staff members; and, on the other hand, it was likely to be misused unless there were constant monitoring and oversight, which were hard to maintain over time. A better way would be to ask programme managers to write job descriptions and ascertain qualifications and competencies required of candidates to fill vacant posts. On that basis a multinational panel of senior managers could make the pertinent recommendation to the Secretary-General for final selection. Such a process would help to prevent cronyism and would address the need for representativeness, mobility across jobs, better performance and fairness.

68. Judicious use of contractual arrangements for staff deployment could add value to performance and ensure the best possible use of human resources when necessary. In management, some discretionary authority was inevitable, but too much of it would surely lead to undesirable consequences.

69. The United Nations should be able to respond to the diverse demands of Member States in a professional, efficient and effective manner. To that end, it should adopt a corporate management style, while maintaining its representative character, ensuring justice and upholding objectivity in a complex cultural and organizational milieu that neither tolerated inefficiency nor compromised impartiality. The United Nations must focus on synthesis and synergy in management principles and practices. It was in the interest of all concerned for the United Nations to have a representative, professional, efficient, responsive and accountable human resource management that could better serve the membership. That was what the Heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit had meant when they had encouraged the application of the best management practices and technologies available.

70. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said that her delegation supported the statement on agenda item 123 delivered by the representative of Nigeria speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Its staff was indeed the most important asset of the Organization, and the dedication of staff members in furthering the principles of the Organization, even at the cost of their lives and despite the continuing financial crisis and dwindling resources, was commendable. It was of the utmost necessity that human resources should be effectively managed, especially in the light of the increasing needs and expectations of Member States and the challenges of the twenty-first century.

71. Her delegation appreciated the tremendous efforts that had gone into the preparation of the Secretary-

General's human resources reform proposals in 10 areas (A/55/253), which were aimed at creating an organizational culture that was responsive and results-oriented, rewarded creativity and innovation and promoted continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence.

72. Central to the human resources management reform was the need to establish a well-defined mechanism of accountability and responsibility before delegation of authority was implemented, as well as an effective and fair internal system of justice. It was important that abuse of discretionary power should be avoided through an effective monitoring system and a mechanism where grievances were effectively addressed and due process was respected.

73. In the Secretary-General's proposed system of recruitment, placement and promotion, outlined in document A/55/253, efforts to reduce the length of the recruitment process were appreciated. At the same time, there was a need to ensure that vacancy announcements were received in a timely manner to enable Member States to present qualified candidates and avoid the impression that certain candidates had been pre-selected. During informal consultations on that item, her delegation would seek clarification of the application of the proposed new system of filling vacancies by either recruitment or promotion. The use of selection criteria should not in any way result in unequal treatment of any serving staff in respect of their promotion. Merit should be the paramount consideration in the promotion of staff in all categories, irrespective of nationality.

74. Staff mobility was a positive element which would enrich career development. It was however important to ensure that staff returning from mission assignment were placed immediately against an established post within their occupational network. Her delegation shared the view of the Advisory Committee that staff assigned by the Organization to a mission longer than two years should have the same guarantee of being able to return to a job within their occupational network and duty station as for those absent for less than two years.

75. On the question of the proposed new contractual arrangements, she said that her delegation awaited with interest the information requested on the differences between continuing and permanent contracts and the implications of those proposals on the career development of staff.

76. There had been some improvement in the area of gender balance. However, the slow pace of improvement in the representation of women from developing countries at senior level posts remained a source of concern; greater efforts should be made in that regard. The majority of staff in the General Service and related categories were women. Their concerns and aspirations for upward mobility deserved attention particularly since they had invested their own time and money to obtain the necessary qualifications and experience.

77. The only opportunity for qualified General Service staff to be promoted to the Professional category was through the internal competitive exam and it was therefore regrettable that no examinations were being held, pending a review of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221, section V, paragraph 22. Staff members of all nationalities and all categories should be afforded equal opportunity for promotion on the basis of merit; that would certainly motivate staff to improve themselves professionally. The issue of the internal examinations must therefore be resolved promptly.

78. **Mr. Alatrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Human resources management was an extremely important issue which must be discussed in a balanced, fair and responsible manner; it should not be seen as distinct from the humanist philosophy which affirmed the value of the human being and the importance of ensuring his well-being, the pillars on which the United Nations had been built. The approach to that issue must therefore be different from that used in commercial enterprises, where utility was the decisive factor in decision-taking.

79. It was certainly true that it was the staff that gave an organization its own unique identity; the United Nations Secretariat provided the foundation for the Organization's activities as a whole. Its multicultural staff worked under the direction of the Secretary-General, totally independent of national Governments. The Charter of the United Nations offered staff members security of employment and called for ensuring the highest standards of efficiency,

competence and integrity, as well as the widest possible geographical representation.

80. In the United Nations, the process of organizing human resources management, as in other similar organizations, must be an interdisciplinary effort in which objectives were set, activities necessary to achieve those objectives were defined, clearly delimited tasks were distributed among the various posts, and, finally, complementary posts were organized into units and the linkages between them defined. His delegation wished to submit just such a proposal to the Secretariat, in which each step of each phase would be described in detail and the nature of and justification for changes, as well as the expected advantages with regard to financial and human resources, would be duly explained.

81. The human resources management reforms being proposed by the Secretariat were radical, and their effects were difficult to predict. Indeed, there was a danger that they might do away with the international civil service, without achieving the desired objectives. It was true that there were, currently, errors, injustices and irregularities and, perhaps, even discrimination in the way posts were assigned and promotions given and in the way chiefs treated their junior staff. Such problems must be resolved, but the proposed reforms should be analysed — and their effects weighed — before being put into practice. It would appear that the proposal before the Committee was simply an application of the concept of results-based budgeting, about which there had not yet been any agreement.

82. The deficiencies of the current system were essentially the result of infractions and violations of the administrative rules and regulations by a few irresponsible officials, and deficiencies in the Organization's accountability and administration of justice structures. Accordingly, there was no need for radical changes throughout the system; it would suffice to ensure that existing regulations were followed and applied to strengthen the internal justice administration and accountability structures.

83. In order to adopt appropriate solutions, a detailed analysis must be made of the additional human and financial resources required to implement the proposals of the Secretary-General. If programme managers were to devote a great deal of time and effort to human resources management, that might prejudice implementation of key programmes. He wondered, for example, how the results of policy management within the Organization would be evaluated and requested an estimate of the savings expected to result from the delegation of authority to programme managers.

84. His delegation was also concerned by the lack of balance in the geographical distribution of posts. As could be seen from the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/55/427), there was currently not a single Libyan citizen at a senior level in the Secretariat or in any United Nations fund or programme in New York, even though Libya met all its financial obligations promptly. The Secretariat should institute a transparent and fair process for the filling of posts and inform States promptly of any vacancies so that they could propose candidates within the required time frame. He also hoped that the Secretary-General would, to the extent possible, be even-handed in naming his special representatives and special envoys. Given the many vacancies to be filled, he hoped that Libya would obtain its fair share of posts as determined by the criterion of equitable geographical distribution.

85. *Ms. Dinić (Croatia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

86. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that an organization's most important asset was its staff; accordingly, investment in human resources in the current context of globalization and competition should be a priority. An organization such as the United Nations, which traditionally had highly qualified staff to discharge with professionalism the important responsibilities entrusted to the Organization by the Member States, should have a human resources policy directed towards excellence and continuous improvement. Such a policy must, however, go hand in hand with initiatives that inspired trust in the staff and gave them the necessary security within a context of shared responsibility between management and staff, and with the conditions necessary for career development and accountability for performance.

87. In connection with the far-reaching reform process which the Organization was undergoing, his delegation supported the principle of equitable geographical representation and the goal of achieving a gender balance among the staff. The United Nations should maintain a remuneration policy that attracted the best candidates to vacant posts. Any human resources reform should involve improved career prospects so as to preserve the necessary human

capital, together with transparent performance appraisal and accountability mechanisms, and a coherent mobility and training policy.

88. The ageing of the Organization was a cause for concern. In the next five years, up to 400 staff members would be retiring each year. The challenge was not how to fill those vacancies, but how to make sure that all the highly motivated junior professionals who were joining the Organization did not leave because of the uncertainty generated by a virtually fossilized administrative structure.

89. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's staff management initiatives and welcomed the prospect of reducing the time it took to fill vacancies to reasonable proportions. It likewise supported the introduction of mechanisms to strengthen oversight of financial and human resources management and of accountability for delivering results.

90. With regard to the contractual arrangements dealt with in section E of the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform (A/55/253), it should be noted that, although the proposal concerning fixed-term appointments continued the practice of a probationary period of at least two years prior to conversion to a continuing appointment, some questions arose in connection with the planning of mobility and training policies.

91. One question, for instance, was how to ensure that new staff members could experience at least two different jobs in their first five years of service (A/55/253, annex III, para. 13), when fixed-term appointments involved a degree of uncertainty, both for the staff member and for the Organization. He also wondered how training could be planned if it was not known for sure what human resources would be available on a permanent basis. Certainty contributed to good performance; at the same time there should be a coherent policy for performance appraisal, mobility, and career development.

92. **Mr. Al-Mansour** (Kuwait) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Secretary-General's reform programme contained a large number of initiatives to strengthen the administrative system through new strategies and it highlighted the need for a meticulous and comprehensive review of human resources management in order to improve the calibre and performance of staff, ensure more efficient management of human resources and strengthen the international civil service.

93. One of the highest priorities of the Secretary-General's reform programme was improved human resources management. That called for managers who were qualified, responsible and who were held accountable and staff members with the necessary motivation, training and ability to discharge their duties in the context of a simple, transparent system. The staff of the United Nations were the key to any reform. The work they carried out was commendable, especially when it was done in difficult circumstances, sometimes at the risk of their lives. Procedures relating to appointments and promotions should be more transparent and simple and long delays should not be the norm. Appointments to entry-level posts in the Professional category should be approved by the Office of Human Resources Management; that would help ease bureaucratic procedures and would be a further positive factor in the reform process.

94. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/55/427), he said that the data on changes that had taken place in the desirable ranges for the representation of Member States clearly showed that it had been possible to reduce the number of countries that were unrepresented or under-represented. His delegation was pleased to report that a Kuwaiti citizen occupied a senior management post and hoped that Kuwait would soon be in a position to place more of its nationals in high-level posts and thus attain what it regarded as fair representation. In that regard, the Office of Human Resources Management should give priority to States that were unrepresented or under-represented, ensure that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was the basic consideration for filling vacancies in the Organization and assign to developing States the proper proportion of senior-level posts.

95. **Mr. Ouane** (Mali) associated himself with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said he shared the view of the Deputy-Secretary-General that the United Nations could not achieve its objectives of peace and international security and socio-economic development without highly qualified, motivated staff dedicated to the pursuit of the ideals of the United Nations. The reform programme initiated by the Secretary-General three years previously, sought to create a new dynamic

with regard to staff recruitment, promotion and mobility. That initiative should be encouraged, since the Organization's survival depended on its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to take account of its staff's aspirations in terms of conditions of service. Moreover, in order to attract and retain personnel of the highest calibre it was necessary to be able to offer good career prospects. Finally, in implementing the reform, it would be necessary to respect the principle of equitable geographical distribution, improve conditions of service and achieve a fair and equitable recruitment system.

96. With regard to contractual arrangements, he pointed out that in paragraph 47 of the report (A/55/253), the Secretary-General proposed three types of appointments for all functions: short-term appointments, fixed-term appointments, and continuing appointments. A clarification of the new continuing appointments, and of their relationship to the current system of permanent appointments, would be useful. His delegation believed that, in view of the particular nature of international civil service, permanent contracts should be retained, in conformity with the provisions of the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the recruitment of young people in launching the new system. The retirement of an average of 400 staff members per year in the five coming years would constitute a great opportunity in that regard. In addition, the status of women and their number in the Secretariat should continue to be improved, in order to meet the goals set in the relevant United Nations resolutions.

97. The reports submitted by the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretary-General on the administration of justice at the United Nations (A/55/57* and A/55/253, annex V) deserved special attention, since the streamlining of procedures, the strengthening of confidence in existing mechanisms, and the protection of staff rights were the building blocks of effective justice administration.

98. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) supported the statement on agenda item 123 formulated by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. United Nations staff members helped to promote the purposes and principles of the Organization. Their views were therefore essential in any reform of human resources management undertaken by the Office of Human Resources Management.

99. During the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had stated before the Fifth Committee that accountability at all levels was the guiding principle of the reform and that, in order to promote it, the dialogue between the various hierarchical levels would have to be improved, without losing sight of the concepts of due application of procedures, equity and respect for diversity, and fulfilling the requirements for geographical and gender balance. Human resources management reform was not a means of reducing the budget or eliminating staff but rather represented an alliance and a division of responsibilities between the Secretariat and the Member States. Those principles should serve as a guide to the Fifth Committee during the current session.

100. In resolution 53/221, the General Assembly recognized the need to promote accountability at all levels, and requested that, before authority was delegated, accountability mechanisms should be established and the administration of justice improved, taking into consideration the central role played by the Office of Human Resources Management. Having read the reports on that matter, his delegation noted that a comprehensive accountability system had not been established at all levels, as requested by the Assembly. That was an extremely sensitive issue, since delegation of authority, accountability and the creation of an integrated system for the administration of justice in the United Nations were complementary and inseparable elements. In that regard, he welcomed the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the administration of justice at the United Nations (A/55/57*) and the importance it attached to the application of the minimum standards adopted by the International Labour Organization, which the States Members of the United Nations considered satisfactory.

101. Paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report in document A/55/253 established a link between human resources management reform and results-oriented budgeting, a concept that the General Assembly had not endorsed. The Secretariat should provide more details in that regard. Clarifications should also be provided regarding the new continuing appointment, discussed in paragraph 47. It would also be useful to know why the concept of permanent appointment was to be eliminated, and what was the difference between

a permanent appointment and a continuing appointment. Moreover, the document did not establish a term for a continuing appointment, which raised doubts as to whether that type of contractual arrangement fulfilled the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221 regarding the dual system of career and fixed-term appointments.

102. His delegation expressed its satisfaction at the content of paragraph 50 of A/55/253, in which the Secretary-General stated that he would welcome the views of the General Assembly, in particular with regard to the issue of permanent contracts, and expressed his wish further to review issues linked to terms and types of appointments and to continue the dialogue with staff before presenting specific recommendations to the Assembly.

103. His delegation attached great importance to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and believed that the situation of unrepresented or under-represented countries should be improved by holding national competitive examinations. As for the mobility of staff members, that principle should be applied in accordance with clear, fair and systematic principles, taking into consideration the situation of each staff member.

104. Lastly, he requested the prompt distribution of documents reflecting the views of staff, for the information of delegations. The delay in the distribution of those documents called for an explanation, since both the six-weeks rule and the principle of six days before the discussion had been ignored.

105. **Mr. Bouheddou** (Algeria) fully supported the statement on agenda item 123 made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and agreed with other speakers who had stressed that staff members were the most important asset in the efficient functioning of the Organization. Accordingly, it was imperative to implement a modern and rational human resource management policy which would ensure the recruitment and retention of competent and motivated civil servants. The proposed human resources management reform was very timely given the large number of retirements and vacancies in the near future.

106. He welcomed the reduction in time required to fill vacant posts proposed in the reform. However, although the delegation of authority to programme managers could accelerate the current slow hiring process, it would not guarantee transparency or objectivity. Delegation of authority must be accompanied by a rigorous system of accountability and the administration of justice. For that reason, it was important that the Office of Human Resources Management should maintain its oversight role, in particular in cases where there had been irregularities.

107. The contractual arrangements proposed in document A/55/253 must be studied in depth. The relationship between continuing and permanent appointments must be clarified, together with any possible effect of the continuing appointment system on geographical distribution, a principle to which his delegation attached particular importance.

108. With regard to proposals aimed at promoting mobility, he said such efforts were justified given the number of activities in the field and the importance of rapid deployment of staff. Nevertheless, the use of subjective criteria and abuses of power on the part of programme managers must be avoided.

109. He expressed concern at the potential for fraud in the application of the education grant entitlement at Headquarters and other duty stations, as indicated in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on its proactive investigation of the education grant entitlement (A/55/352).

110. His delegation had studied the note by the Secretary-General (A/55/57/Add.1) commenting on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Administration of justice at the United Nations" (A/55/57*) and was of the opinion that some of the Secretary-General's observations were far from convincing. For example, JIU had not expressly suggested that human rights provisions and other important international instruments should be incorporated into the Organization's internal regulations but had simply pointed out that those instruments were not incorporated in those regulations.

111. The quality of the administration of justice depended on many institutional and human factors but could not be dissociated from the applicable legislation, especially in the area of human rights, a fundamental consideration which superseded all others. If, as the Secretary-General stated (A/55/57/Add.1, para. 6), "all relevant basic labour standards enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are fully reflected in the United Nations staff conditions of

service", it would be appropriate to include them expressly.

112. He also did not understand why the Secretary-General stated that the Executive Secretary of the Administrative Tribunal would no longer report to the President of the Tribunal on substantive matters but would report instead to the head of the proposed office for the settlement of disputes and the administration of justice. Clearly the latter would be responsible for administrative matters, the same relationship that existed between the Legal Counsel and the Executive Secretary of the Administrative Tribunal and between the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and the Secretary of the Joint Appeals Board.

113. He approved of the suggestion by the Joint Inspection Unit that the addition of a post of Deputy Secretary would help the Administrative Tribunal carry out its functions efficiently and expeditiously. He also agreed that members of the Joint Appeals Board should be offered basic training in legal matters (A/55/57*, para. 130), to help them make well-founded recommendations which would be more readily accepted. He failed to see why the Administration was opposed to appointing a staff member with strong legal qualifications to the post of Coordinator of the Panel of Counsel (A/55/57/Add.1, para. 28). As recommended by JIU, the post of Coordinator, currently classified at the General Services level, should be reclassified to avoid possible friction with his staff, who would hold Professional level posts.

114. **Mr. Smagulov** (Kazakhstan) said that human resources management reform was an important component of the general reform of the Organization, and the staff deserved to have their needs and problems addressed.

115. His delegation supported the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253) with a view to improving the functioning of the Secretariat. Since the efficiency of the Organization depended, among others, on appropriate staffing of the Secretariat, he agreed that there should be a transparent review of the process of distribution of vacant posts among Member States in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution and that the average time required to fill vacant posts should be reduced.

116. The problem of unrepresented or under-represented countries in the Secretariat was of special concern to his Government, since in its eight years as a Member of the United Nations, no citizen of Kazakhstan had been appointed to the staff of the Secretariat, in spite of the fact that Kazakhstan had contributed more than $30 million to the total budget of the Organization. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had raised that issue on numerous occasions. Moreover, the names of candidates had been proposed and applications had been submitted to programmes of experts associated with the United Nations, but without result. Resolution of that problem not only would be an act of justice but would also help his Government establish its own civil service by taking advantage of the skills of specialists who had acquired experience during service with the United Nations.

117. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to develop the process of human resources management in the area of mobility, so that the staff of the United Nations could operate in a multidisciplinary environment, and to provide local staff with well-paid activity on a stable and predictable basis. It agreed with the Group of 77 and China that human resources management reform should not cause any reduction of staff or financial flows.

118. **Ms. D'Alva** (Guinea-Bissau) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement on agenda item 123 made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The only way for the Organization to become a "moral centre" on which to build a civilization founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, equity, justice and liberty was by giving qualified citizens of all Member States a chance to contribute their knowledge and experience to the work of the Organization.

119. Guinea-Bissau, which had been a Member of the United Nations since 1974, had, over the years, presented highly qualified candidates for positions within the Secretariat. Some of those candidates had been selected but never recruited. Several reasons had been cited, including the freezing of posts, priority given to internal candidates and to women, or recruitment of candidates that spoke a particular language, even when those from Guinea-Bissau spoke four or five languages.

120. In 1987 the United Nations had organized a national competitive examination for Guinea-Bissau,

and some candidates had been selected. Nevertheless, they had never been recruited. When the Permanent Mission had been asked to assist the Secretariat in identifying qualified citizens from Guinea-Bissau interested in working in social, political, administrative and financial sectors of the Secretariat, the names of qualified persons had been submitted, but again to no avail. It was of deep concern to her Government that some managers, even at the highest levels, were not complying with the mandate of the General Assembly to recruit from unrepresented or under-represented countries.

121. All too often, vacancy announcements seemed tailor-made for preferred candidates (and in some cases, those persons had already taken up their functions), or else interviews were not conducted in good faith. Guinea-Bissau was completely without representation in the Secretariat. Her delegation therefore deplored the non-compliance with the guidelines on equitable geographical distribution and awaited with keen interest the results of the selection process for candidates to fill two vacant posts subject to geographical distribution for which Guinea-Bissau had proposed two highly qualified nationals.

122. **Mr. Jara** (Chile) said that he wished to support the statement on agenda item 123 made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He expressed concern over the situation regarding promotion of General Service staff to the Professional category as a result of the interpretation given to section V, paragraph 22 of General Assembly resolution 53/221. In view of the ambiguity arising from interpretation of that paragraph, the Fifth Committee should study and settle the matter.

123. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan), referring to the matter of management irregularities as outlined in document A/54/793, drew the attention of the Committee to a problem which, in his opinion, could be causing financial losses to the Organization and had apparently escaped internal controls. It concerned the evident monopoly in the Secretariat of a travel agency which offered very expensive tickets with excessive restrictions. Not only was the Organization incurring financial losses, but also persons travelling on United Nations business were experiencing great inconvenience.

124. He wished to know whether travel restrictions were being applied universally to all who travelled on United Nations business, what criteria were applied in selecting national carriers, how travel agents were selected and what internal controls were being used to ensure that they were not causing financial losses to the Organization.

125. **Mr. Moniaga** (Indonesia) and **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Secretariat should provide clarification on the important issue raised by the representative of Pakistan.

126. **Mr. Hamidullah** (Bangladesh), supported by **Mr. Bouheddou** (Algeria), said that the point raised by the delegation of Pakistan with regard to management irregularities which caused financial losses to the Organization was of the utmost importance. He asked for an explanation of the rules with regard to travel paid by the United Nations and what criteria were applied for the choice of airlines. His delegation had observed some distortion in the pricing of airline tickets, which could be bought much more cheaply in the marketplace, for up to 50 per cent less. He also deplored the excessive restrictions imposed for making travel changes. He looked forward to receiving the relevant information from the Secretariat in order to study the matter closely with a view to correcting potential anomalies.

127. **Ms. Silot** (Cuba) endorsed the statements of representatives who had spoken on the subject of travel restrictions. Her delegation had been adversely affected by such restrictions. It would therefore examine with interest the information furnished by the Secretariat on the subject so that steps could be taken to remedy any anomalies that undermined the international character of the Organization and the efforts to economize.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.